

1     **Amendment to the Claims**

2     In the Claims:

3             Please cancel Claims 7, 26, and 35.

4             Please amend Claims 1, 3, 14, 33, and 36 as follows.

5             1. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling a host player to select one or more other  
6 participants to join in playing a multiplayer online electronic game, comprising the steps of:

7                     (a) enabling the host player to create a list of contacts comprising one or more  
8 other persons who may be interested in participating in playing the multiplayer online electronic  
9 game;

10                    (b) enabling the host player to select one or more of the other persons from among  
11 the list of contacts to participate in playing the multiplayer online electronic game;

12                    (c) automatically sending an electronic invitation to each of the one or more other  
13 persons selected by the host player, to join in playing the multiplayer online electronic game; ~~and~~

14                    (d) enabling each of the one or more other persons who receive the electronic  
15 invitation that was automatically sent, to selectively join the multiplayer online electronic game as a  
16 participant; and

17                    (e) providing an availability status for each person in the list of contacts so as to  
18 enable the host player to identify persons in the list of contacts who are currently available for  
19 playing the multiplayer online electronic game.

20             2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of providing an availability  
21 status for each person in the list of contacts so as to enable the host player to identify persons in the  
22 list of contacts who are currently available to participate in playing the multiplayer online electronic  
23 game.

24             3. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 2, further comprising the step of enabling  
25 each person in the list of contacts to select ~~an~~ the availability status indicating the person's  
26 availability for participating in playing a the multiplayer online electronic game.

27             4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the host player is enabled to build a list of chat  
28 contacts through use of an online messaging service, said list of chat contacts automatically being  
29 parsed to create the list of contacts.  
30

1           5. (Original) The method of Claim 4, wherein at least one person in the list of contacts is not  
2 currently logged into the online messaging service and has been invited to join the multiplayer online  
3 electronic game, further comprising the step of automatically forwarding the electronic invitation to  
4 join the multiplayer online electronic game to said at least one person when said at least one person  
5 logs into the online messaging service.

6           6. (Original) The method of Claim 4, wherein selection of game participants and voice chat  
7 communications before and during game play is facilitated by a gaming utility that runs on an  
8 electronic device operated by each game participant and at least one person in the list of contacts has  
9 been invited to join the multiplayer online electronic game and has not started an instance of the  
10 gaming utility on the electronic device(s) operated by said at least one person, further comprising the  
11 step of automatically forwarding the electronic invitation to join the multiplayer online electronic  
12 game to said at least one person when said at least one person launches an instance of the gaming  
13 utility on the electronic device(s) operated by said at least one person.

14           7. (Cancelled)

15           8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the electronic invitation comprises a verbal  
16 message.

17           9. (Original) The method of Claim 8, further comprising the step of enabling the electronic  
18 invitation to be accepted by a person invited to join the game through a verbal response spoken by  
19 said person.

20           10. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of providing a list of  
21 multiplayer online electronic games to the host player; and enabling the host player to select the  
22 multiplayer online electronic game from said list of multiplayer online electronic games.

23           11. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

24               (a) providing a user interface including a first display area on which the list of  
25 contacts is displayed and a second display area corresponding to a voice chat session; and

26               (b) enabling the host to select the one or more contracts to invite to join the voice  
27 chat session by selecting one or more contacts from among the list of contacts displayed in the first  
28 display area and dragging and dropping them onto the second display area.

29           12. (Original) The method of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of contacts can be selected and  
30 dragged and dropped onto the second display area at one time.

1           13. (Original) A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for  
2 performing the steps recited in Claim 1.

3           14. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling a host player to select one or more other  
4 players to participate in a multiplayer online electronic game played using a plurality of electronic  
5 devices linked in communication over a communications network, each of said plurality of electronic  
6 devices being operated by a different player, the method comprising the steps of:

7                   (a)     enabling the host player to initiate a chat session;  
8                   (b)     enabling the host player to invite one or more other players to join the chat  
9 session;

10                  (c)     enabling any of the players who were invited by the host, to be a participant in  
11 the chat session; ~~and~~

12                  (d)     automatically launching an instance of the multiplayer online electronic game  
13 on each electronic device being operated by any player participating in the chat session, said step of  
14 automatically launching being in response to a game initiating action performed by the host player so  
15 that any player participating in the chat session automatically becomes a participant in the  
16 multiplayer online electronic game; and

17                  (e)     enabling each player to transmit voice chat data to all of the other players who  
18 have joined the chat session.

19           15. (Original) The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of providing a network  
20 address of the electronic device the host player is using and operating so as to enable the host player  
21 to invite one or more other players to join in playing the multiplayer online electronic game, by  
22 referencing said network address.

23           16. (Original) The method of Claim 14, wherein the host player is a member of an online  
24 messaging service that enables the host player to build a player contact list comprising a list of one or  
25 more players with whom the host prefers to chat and/or play multiplayer online electronic games,  
26 further comprising the steps of:

27                   (a)     displaying the player contact list to the host player; and

28                   (b)     enabling the host player to select one or more other players to participate in  
29 playing the multiplayer online electronic game from the player contact list.  
30

1           17. (Original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of providing an  
2 availability status for each player in the player contact list.

3           18. (Original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of enabling each player  
4 to select an availability status indicating the player's availability to join a chat session.

5           19. (Original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the steps of:

6               (a) providing a user interface including a first display area on which the list of  
7 contacts is displayed and a second display area corresponding to a voice chat session; and

8               (b) enabling the host to select the one or more contracts to invite to join the voice  
9 chat session by selecting one or more contacts from among the list of contacts displayed in the first  
10 display area and dragging and dropping them onto the second display area.

11           20. (Original) The method of Claim 19, wherein a plurality of contacts can be selected and  
12 dragged and dropped onto the second display area at one time.

13           21. (Original) The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of sending an electronic  
14 invitation to join the chat session to each of the one or more players invited by the host player to join  
15 the chat session.

16           22. (Original) The method of Claim 21, wherein the electronic invitation includes an audible  
17 announcement apprising any player receiving the electronic invitation that the host player has invited  
18 the player to join the chat session.

19           23. (Original) The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of enabling the  
20 electronic invitation to join the chat session to be accepted by a recipient through a verbal response  
21 spoken by the recipient, whereupon said recipient becomes a participant in the chat session.

22           24. (Original) The method of Claim 14, wherein each player is a member of an online  
23 messaging service that enables the player to build a player contact list comprising a list of one or  
24 more players with whom the player prefers to chat and/or play multiplayer online computer games,  
25 further comprising the step of:

26               (a) providing a list of chat sessions that are being hosted by at least one other  
27 player contact in a player contact list built by the player; and

28               (b) enabling the player to join a chat session appearing in the list of chat sessions.

29           25. (Original) The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of providing a headset  
30 operatively coupled in communication with each of said plurality of electronic devices, each headset

1 comprising at least one sound transducer and a microphone employed by each players to participate  
2 in a voice chat session.

3 26. (Cancelled)

4 27. (Original) The method of Claim 14, further comprising the steps of providing a list of  
5 multiplayer online electronic games; and enabling the host player to select the multiplayer online  
6 electronic game that will be played.

7 28. (Original) A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for  
8 performing the steps recited in Claim 14.

9 29. (Original) A method for enabling a host player to select one or more other players to  
10 participate in a multiplayer online electronic game played using a plurality of electronic devices  
11 linked in communication over a communications network, each of said plurality of electronic devices  
12 being operated by a different player, the method comprising the steps of:

13 (a) enabling the host player to initiate a voice chat session;

14 (b) enabling the host player to invite one or more other players to join the voice  
15 chat session;

16 (c) enabling any of the players who were invited by the host, to be a participant in  
17 the voice chat session;

18 (d) enabling the host player to forward a network address corresponding to an  
19 electronic device being operated by the host to any other player participating in the voice chat  
20 session; and

21 (e) transmitting a voice chat message from the host player to any other player  
22 participating in the voice chat session, said voice chat message identifying a multiplayer online  
23 electronic game that the host player will be launching or has already launched on the electronic  
24 device operated by the host player so that any other player participating in the voice chat session can  
25 selectively launch an instance of the multiplayer online electronic game on the electronic device  
26 operated by the player, so that any player participating in the chat session who selectively launches  
27 the multiplayer online electronic game becomes a participant in the multiplayer online electronic  
28 game.

29 30. (Original) The method of Claim 29, wherein the host player is a member of an online  
30 messaging service that enables the host player to build a player contact list of one or more players

1 with whom the host prefers to chat and/or play multiplayer online computer games, further  
2 comprising the steps of:

- 3 (a) providing the player contact list to the host player; and
- 4 (b) enabling the host player to select one or more players to participate in the  
5 multiplayer online electronic game from the player contact list.

6 31. (Original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of providing an  
7 availability status for each player in the player contact list.

8 32. (Original) A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for  
9 performing the steps recited in Claim 29.

10 33. (Currently Amended) A system for enabling a host player to select one or more other  
11 players to participate in playing a multiplayer online electronic game played using a plurality of electronic  
12 devices linked in communication over a communications network, each of said plurality of electronic  
13 devices being operated by a different player and including:

- 14 (a) a display on which a user interface is implemented;
- 15 (b) a memory in which a plurality of machine instructions are stored; and
- 16 (c) a microphone operatively coupled to the electronic device and which produces  
17 audio signals in response to words spoken by a user into the microphone;

- 18 (d) a sound transducer operatively coupled to the electronic device so as to  
19 replicate sounds corresponding to an audio data signal received over the communications network by  
20 the electronic device to which said at least one sound transducer is operatively coupled;

21 (ee) a processor coupled to the memory for executing said plurality of machine  
22 instructions, said processor implementing a plurality of functions when executing the machine  
23 instructions, including:

- 24 (i) enabling the host player to initiate a chat session;
- 25 (ii) enabling the host player to invite one or more other players to join the  
26 chat session;
- 27 (iii) enabling any of the players who were invited by the host, to be a  
28 participant in the chat session; and
- 29 (iv) automatically launching an instance of the multiplayer online electronic  
30 game on each electronic device being operated by any player participating in the chat session, said

1 step of automatically launching being in response to a game initiating action performed by the host  
2 player so that any player participating in the chat session automatically becomes a participant in the  
3 multiplayer online electronic game; and

4 (v) employing the microphone, the sound transducer, and the electronic  
5 device to enable each player to transmit voice chat data to all other players participating in the chat  
6 session.

7 34. (Original) The system of Claim 33, wherein the host player is a member of an online  
8 messaging service that enables the host player to build a player contact list of one or more players  
9 with whom the host may desire to play multiplayer online computer games, and wherein execution of  
10 the plurality of machine instructions further implements the functions of:

- 11 (a) obtaining the player contact list from the online messaging service;  
12 (b) displaying the player contact list to the host player; and  
13 (c) enabling the host player to select one or more players to participate in the  
14 multiplayer online electronic game from the player contact list.

15 35. (Cancelled)

16 36. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim ~~35~~33, wherein execution of the plurality of  
17 machine instructions further implements the function of sending an electronic invitation to join the  
18 chat session to a player invited by the host player to join the chat session.

19 37. (Original) The system of Claim 36, wherein the electronic invitation causes an audible  
20 announcement to be produced with said at least one sound transducer apprising each recipient of the  
21 electronic invitation that the host player has invited the recipient to join the chat session.

22 38. (Original) The system of Claim 37, wherein execution of the plurality of machine  
23 instructions further implements the function of enabling the electronic invitation to be accepted by a  
24 recipient through use of a verbal response spoken into the microphone by the recipient.